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PLAIN THOUGHTS

OF

A PLAIN MAN,

ADDRESSED TO

THE COMMON SENSE OF THE PEOPLE OF
GREAT BRITAIN:

WITH

A FEW WORDS, EN PASSANT, TO THE
UNCOMMON SENSE

OF

MR. ERSKINE.

Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares; sed omnes
omnium caritates patria una complexa est: pro qua quis bonus
dubitet mortem appetere? Cic.

LONDON:

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1797.

PLAIN THOUGHTS

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A PLAIN MAN,

CRISTIAN: HST



A FEW WORDS, IN PASSANT, TO THE

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. BELL, No. 148, OXFORD-STREET.

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PLAIN THOUGHTS, &c.

MY COUNTRYMEN,

THE time, which is passing by us, is so charged with extraordinary circumstance, as to justify the doubts, the apprehensions and astonishment that prevail among mankind. But amidst the unexampled confusion, difficulty and distress that surround us, I have been able to satisfy myself that a return of general order is not an unreasonable expectation; that Europe will soon lose its present miseries; and that this renovated state of our quarter of the globe will proceed from the courage, wisdom and magnanimity, of the British Nation. For it is my firm opinion, that if the tranquillity of Europe is not restored and more se-

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curely established than it has hitherto been ; and if your own country does not attain an higher rank in the scale of Nations than it has yet possessed, the failure of such important objects must be imputed to you. It is not, indeed, for the sake of yourselves, alone ; but for that of your posterity, and, I might add, in behalf of the human race, that you are called upon to exert and continue that vigour, resolution and disdain of temporary inconvenience, that generous patriotism and comprehensive benevolence, which have already done so much for your country and mankind.

I profess myself to be no more than a plain man, with some experience of the world as it is, and some knowledge of it as it has been. From the natural disposition of my mind, I have long been in the habit of directing the enquiries of my understanding to the events of my own time. I have no advantage over any of you, but such as arises from a life of leisure, which, fortunately for yourselves, and your country, the greater part of you do not possess. To such of

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you, therefore, who, amid the occupations of your useful lives, have neither time nor inclination to examine the state of public affairs, or the character of those who conduct them, I address the following observations, the result of my experience, and the sentiments of my heart.

The war in which we are engaged with France is the great preponderating object of all political consideration. The necessity of its commencement, and the policy of its continuance, form a most interesting subject for discussion; and a large portion of the following pages will be employed in it.

War is in itself a very grievous calamity; but even war, when it possesses a remedial nature, may be considered, like many other inconveniencies of life, as a blessing in disguise. The bitter draught that restores health, as well as the knife and the caustic that save the limb from amputation, are only evils of the moment, while the one nauseates on the palate, and the others cause the salutary pain: and he must possess a

very weak mind, or a very dastardly spirit, who shrinks at a temporary evil, which is to preserve him from lasting calamity. The present war, however, did not proceed, as so many wars have done, from the rival spirit of jealous nations, from the wanton ambition of kings, or the incapacity of ministers. It was not a war where the real interests of a people were to be sacrificed to the intrigues of a court, or the vain phantom of glory. It was a war of protection, not merely of one nation, but of almost all civilized Europe, against a people who had declared themselves the enemies of all civilization. It was a war of order against confusion ; of civil government against anarchy ; of freedom against despotism ; of religion against infidelity ; of civilized and rational beings, against a savage, a cannibal and insensate people.

But if we had left the existence of the other countries of Europe to the protection of their respective inhabitants, and forgot, if possible, that our own is involved in it ; if, from a base spirit of selfishness, we had

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satisfied ourselves with a tranquil and inactive contemplation of the advantages attached to our country, we might have been no longer in possession of them. As a people, we enjoy blessings never experienced by any other nation: British freedom maintains a characteristic pre-eminence which the fairest systems of government, in the ancient or modern world, never knew; and our constitution answers the best purposes which social nature is capable of producing. It cannot, therefore, be supposed, for a moment, that we should, with patient submission, behold this noble inheritance threatened with destruction, and that, in defence of such a fabric, formed and established by the blood of our ancestors, we should refuse to shed our own. But, after all, would it have been our interest, to say nothing of our honour (if I dare to throw aside such a consideration when I address myself to Englishmen), to have remained inactive spectators of the dreadful march of ruin throughout Europe, till its devastating progress was directed to our own shores? Could we pretend to feel and love the
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the liberty we enjoyed, without opposing a power which threatened to banish it from the earth? Do we not know that religion offers the best hopes to virtue, lays the most effectual restraints on vice, and affords to the calamities inseparable from our nature the most cordial consolation: and was not this consideration another most powerful motive to resist the career of a people, who not only trampled on their own altars, denied a God, and triumphed amidst the most outrageous blasphemies; but avowed the horrid and infernal design of spreading their hellish infidelity through every other nation?

The British Government, indeed, maintained a magnanimous neutrality in the affairs of France. It regarded the conduct of the French people with tranquil astonishment and calm commiseration, till they openly avowed their design to transfer, if possible, their own destructive anarchy to this country; and till the unprovoked invasion of the territories of our Allies compelled us to draw the sword, and check the strides of a furious and desolating ambition.

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Great Britain was by no means eager to engage in the war. The prevailing object of the Minister, from the moment he was called to the helm, was to secure and extend the prosperity of his country, by increasing its revenues and diminishing its debt. This was the darling project of his mind : it was the work of peace rapidly advancing in its progress, and would have proved a source of glory to him, which he, I doubt not, would have preferred to all the laurels of successful war, though exceeding those which thicken over the tomb of his illustrious father. When, however, war could be no longer avoided, he engaged in it with an hereditary spirit, and I profess the firmest confidence that he will conclude it with hereditary fortune.

The avowed spirit of aggrandisement in France ; the dangerous opinions that not only prevailed in its government, but were industriously circulated among other nations ; and lastly, their infraction of treaties, would, I think, have individually given just cause for commencing hostilities against
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that nation : but Mr. Pitt seems to have waited for a combination of them.—The conquest of Savoy, the irruption into Germany, the invasion of the Austrian Netherlands, and the avowed design of opening the navigation of the Scheld in defiance of treaties, formed such a serious attack upon the balance of power in Europe, as to give just cause of alarm to every nation involved in it.

The Decree of Fraternization, which was published by the Convention in November 1792, was the signal for rebellion in every country in Europe, and an unequivocal declaration of war against all regular government. It is impossible to forget that it promised every aid of the Republic of France to the discontented inhabitants of every other country ; and even commanded the Executive Power to co-operate, through the medium of the French Generals, with any people whatever, who had suffered, or were then suffering, in the cause of Freedom ; that is to say, who were disposed to rise in rebellion against their respective governments.

ments. We well know the ferment which followed in this country ; and we cannot but have a grateful remembrance of the wisdom and spirit of the Government which controuled and subdued it.—Nor should the manner in which deputies from certain seditious societies were received by the Convention, be forgotten ; and the encouragement given them to proceed in their designs of subverting the Constitution of their country. At length the Decree of Hostilities against the King of Great Britain, issued by the National Convention in February 1793, left us no alternative ; and we became parties in the war.

It has been asserted by the Leaders of Opposition, and with as much confidence as if they really believed it, that, in the commencement of the war, the Executive Government of France was not only willing, but anxious to engage in a pacific treaty with Great Britain ; and that the folly of Ministers alone prevented this country from enjoying all the advantages of peace, while the rest of Europe was actually suffering

the miseries of war. What secret information might, at this time, be transmitted to certain men in this country, I shall not presume to conjecture. But the apparent, nay the vaunted, object of France, was the destruction of all the established governments and constituted authorities in Europe. The arrests and decrees of the Convention contained nothing but the wild avowals of their hostile designs. They had already offered protection and support to the subjects of any kingdom or state who wished to overturn its government. Nay, did not Thomas Paine, the organ of French anarchy and confusion, declare, that France must be surrounded with revolutions before she could expect to be in peace and safety? The man must have possessed more courage or less discretion than Mr. Fox himself, who would have gone on the dangerous errand of proposing peace to Robespierre. If he should perchance have arrived at the gates of Paris, his diplomatic credentials, instead of introducing him to an audience of the democratic despot of France, would rather have proved a passport to the honours of the guilotine,

lotine. With all their confidence in the pacific disposition and personal honour of the French Executive Government at that period, I do not suspect that any one of the most desperate Members of Opposition could have been bribed to undertake the distinguished embassy.

But let me ask, whether, at the time when it is said that we might have negotiated a treaty of peace with the ruling powers of France, there was any thing in that country like a regular, efficient Government, which could justify confidence or give effect to treaties. On the contrary, had they not assumed a right to trample on the Laws of Nations? Were not their councils mingled with the most inhuman barbarism and atrocious perfidy? and were not those very men, of whom we were to ask peace, very soon conducted to a scaffold, that was still reeking with the blood of their predecessors?

Let us, however, suppose for a moment, that this country had been governed by a Minister, whose pusillanimity, to say no
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worse, had sacrificed the dignity of the British name, the interests of the British people, and the prosperity of Europe, by accepting such a peace as the banditti of France could have granted ; we must then have so solaced ourselves with the reflection, that we had purchased some petty, inglorious, and transient advantage, with the loss of our national honour, and at the risque of our future destruction. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that, during the period of such a peace, no additional taxes would have been levied on us ; but by this time we might not have possessed the property that produces them. Our merchant-ships would not have been taken on the seas ; but as those countries would have been desolated by the armies of France, by which our commerce is supported, our ships must have been rotting in our harbours. Enriched by the plunder, and encouraged by the conquest of those kingdoms whose devastation we had in our love of peace beheld with a tranquil eye, France would at length have poured its myriads on our shores ; while England, lulled in an infatuated security, would have

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added another horrid scene to the desolations of Europe. I do most cordially concur in the opinion of Lord Coventry, which that venerable Nobleman delivered in Parliament, that if Great Britain had not declared war against France, the property of its inhabitants would not have been worth three years purchase. Instead of addressing you, as I now do, in the voice of encouragement, to persevere in supporting the great and distinguished situation in which Providence has placed you ; I might have been engaged in the melancholy duty of soothing your submission to democratic tyranny, or in the more ennobling task of invigorating your despair against it.

If it should be asked what we have gained by the war, an answer has been furnished me by a distinguished Member of the House of Commons—We have gained “all that we should have lost if we had not engaged in it :” —Our Constitution, our Religion, our Liberty, our Property—in short, our existence as a people. But, to satisfy those who do not so well comprehend negative as positive advantages,

advantages, I will endeavour briefly to state what we have obtained of the latter.

The views with which Great Britain engaged in the war with France, were, as far as depended on her, to preserve the established Governments of Europe from that destruction, and the countries subject to them from the ravages with which they were threatened by the infidel, blood-thirsty, but enormous power of their common enemy. To obtain an indemnity for the treasures we might expend in such an arduous undertaking, was a subsequent consideration.

The preservation of Holland from the fire and sword of Dumourier, was the almost immediate consequence of our entering upon the war. The recovery of Austrian Flanders, with the capture of Valenciennes, Condé, &c. from France, soon followed; and it was owing to the perfidy of the King of Prussia, that those places were retaken from, or evacuated by, the Allies, and that Holland at length submitted to France.

France. To produce the latter event, various circumstances, equally extraordinary as unexpected, seem to have conspired. The severity and continuance of the winter of 1795, by freezing the rivers, gave all the assistance that was necessary to the success of the French arms ; while the Dutch themselves, tired of independence, contaminated with democratic principles, lost to every sense of public honour, and, which is still more unaccountable, disdainful of their personal interests, turned upon their friends and allies, reprobated their aid, and received the army of France with triumph and acclamation. As the first proof of its subjection to the will of France, degraded, submissive Holland was forced to declare war against Great Britain, who had proved so faithful an ally and so firm a friend, and, from its naval power, might become so destructive an enemy. But though the British arms could not finally save the United Provinces from the tyranny of France, they at least delayed that event, till many of their best and most opulent inhabitants had removed themselves and their fortunes to more secure situations ;

situations ; while the English merchants had an opportunity of employing the interval, thus fortunately obtained, in such a manner, as to prevent the downfall of the Exchange of Amsterdam from being attended with any serious consequences on the Exchange of London.

But if we turn from the ill-success of our arms on the Continent, to contemplate the progress of our fleets in different parts of the globe, we shall perceive that our naval honour not only has been maintained, but augmented by the successes of the present war. The victories obtained by Lord Howe, Sir John Jervis, and Lord Bridport, will revive in our minds the brightest periods of our naval glory. Not only the Channel, but the Mediterranean, has acknowledged the power of the British flag. During a war of four years, we have lost, I believe, no more than two ships of the line, while half the French navy has been taken or destroyed. In India, the French power is annihilated ; and the Cape of Good Hope, which, whether it is considered as a military station, or a productive colony, is an acquisition,

fition, whose value almost defies calculation. The island of Ceylon is in our possession ; and it is something more than probable, that Batavia, with the rest of the Dutch Oriental Colonies, have already submitted, or will soon submit, to the British Crown.— In the West Indies, though, from a variety of extraordinary circumstances, the horrid manner in which the French carried on the war there, the ravages of disease, and a succession of unfavourable gales, the efforts of the British arms have not been crowned with the expected success, we may now indulge the most sanguine hope that our own islands will be secured from future ravage, and that those of the enemy will soon change anarchy and uproar for the mild and certain protection of the British Government, which Martinico already enjoys. In St. Domingo, the possession of several important posts adds to the pre-eminence of our power in the Western hemisphere ; and the island of St. Lucia is become a part of the British empire.—Our commerce, involving that of Holland, not only flourishes, but, extending itself, in the midst of the most cruel war that ever

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harassed Europe, is become the commerce of the world ; and its fleets receive a protection beyond the example of any former period.—While the Texel is almost as deserted as the Scheld, the Thames, no longer equal to its increasing navigation, demands the addition of wet docks of unexampled extent, for whose construction the merchants of London have subscribed the enormous sum of a Million Sterling.

It may be considered also as an advantage obtained by the war,—that it has worked a change in the moral as well as political opinions of the French nation. It has lowered the crest of Atheism,—and has taken from Death the character of an eternal sleep. Such impious principles and fatalising deliriums are no longer blended with their public deliberations, or are held forth to the faith of a deluded people ; while, freed from the terror of infidel persecution, devotion may once more seek its altars, and misery find consolation in the offices of religion. We have continued the war till France can be considered by none but the worst of men as

an example for imitation, and till its accumulated distress, the fruit of its unparalleled atrocities, must make every reasonable being look with horror on revolutions, and feel the most active energies to support any system of government that produces social comfort, and affords protection in the enjoyment of it.

The war may also be said, with great truth, to have shortened the tyranny of Robespierre, and to have converted his reign of terror into a system of comparative moderation; which has led to somewhat of a regular form of Government. With a change in the political establishment of France, different political opinions have arisen, that have brought its people back to some degree of that civilization which they once appeared to have abandoned for ever. In 1793, it was declared in France, that all men were equal; that population, and not property, was the sole basis of representation; that insurrection was a sacred duty; that these principles should be promulgated in foreign countries; and that all who em-

braced them should be supported and assisted by the arms of France.—In 1795, property was declared to be the basis of representation; and, those who did not pay a direct contribution to the state, as well as persons in domestic servitude, were excluded from the right of suffrage. The government has assumed a mixed form, consisting of three parts, one of which bears an aristocratic character: the system of governing by clubs and societies has been altogether abolished, and the circulation of democratic opinions formally renounced. The armies of France are no longer guided by an unrelenting and savage spirit of massacre, and have restored the rights of honourable war.

Such are the advantages which have been derived to Europe, and to ourselves, from our having engaged in the contest with France. To enter upon the conduct of it would now form a premature discussion. Circumstances which it was impossible for the most quick-sighted politicians to foresee, much less to prevent; and exertions on the
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part of the enemy, arising from a power which no civilized government could produce; and a prodigality of blood, which no civilized country could afford, has given a success to the operations of their numerous armies, which there is great reason to lament and deplore. The merits of a war cannot be fairly judged till it is concluded. But hitherto, I think, under all the extraordinary circumstances of the contest, Great Britain has no small cause for triumph; and, I trust, her glory will appear with unexampled radiance, when she becomes, as I doubt not she will shortly be, the dispenser of peace to afflicted Europe.

We all lament the necessity which compelled us to unsheath our swords; but, it would surely be an act of the most flagrant injustice to blame Mr. Pitt for that necessity, which no man deprecates more than himself; which has increased, in a ten-fold proportion, the difficulties of his situation; and has interrupted that state of public tranquillity, which could alone give efficacy to the plans that he had formed, with so fond a
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zeal, and such commanding sagacity, to ease the burthens of the people, and advance the prosperity of his country. It is the French nation, and the French nation alone, to whom Europe is indebted for its confusions, its alarms, and its bloodshed. It is a spirit the most destructive the world ever knew, that has called the world to arms. It was a monster, that, not satiated with the gore of its own children, was impatient to wallow in the blood of every other people. To complain, therefore, of the Minister, who employs the force and resources of his country to check and subdue such an infernal power, is acting the part of a patient languishing on a bed of sickness, who reprobates his physician because the medicine is unpalatable which will restore him to health.

If, however, it should be asked, why a war, so confidently represented as proceeding from necessity, and founded on the principles of self-defence and security, is so vehemently opposed by men whose talents and information qualify them to decide

cide upon the political situation of their own and other countries? if such a question should occur, an answer may be derived from the passions, situations, and personal interests of mankind, which are so frequently seen to pervert reason, and predominate over the understanding—If such an enquiry should bear a pointed allusion to the party called the Opposition, I shall observe, that, with all their talents, and even, in their present diminished state, there is plenty of them, they are sunk so low in the public opinion, and their political conduct is so little calculated to restore them to any degree of consequence or character, that, at any other period, I should be disposed to regret their low and degraded condition.

In the commencement of the present troubles, the Opposition comprehended certain men whose character was regarded with general estimation, and gave a comparative importance to the party, which it enjoys no more. At this time there was an actual secession of some of them, and a decided

cided difference of opinion arose, among those who remained, concerning the conduct of Administration; nevertheless, they continued, though on different principles, to arraign the measures of it. It is, indeed, a very curious circumstance, which I cannot pass by without notice, that while Mr. Fox, Lord Lansdowne, and their particular adherents, were outrageous against Ministers for exciting the public attention to dangers, which they asserted to be unreal and fallacious—the Duke of Portland, and those immediately connected with that nobleman, censured Administration with equal severity, for a disregard of those very dangers, whose evident existence demanded, in their opinion, a more early attention, and more vigorous remedies. At length, however, the Duke of Portland and Lord Spencer, who had waited, perhaps, for a more perfect conviction of the erroneous opinions of Mr. Fox and his phalanx, or, feeling an amiable reluctance to abandon those with whom they had long lived in the habits of private friendship, as well as political connection, followed the example of Mr. Burke,

Burke, Mr. Windham, and others of their political associates, avowed their determination to support his Majesty's Ministers, and soon added to the strength and integrity of Administration, by taking responsible situations in it. The state of the Opposition, therefore, is now become so diminished, both in numbers and character, that nothing but the common despair of its Leaders keeps it together, and a little fancied importance, which the weakness or vanity of some individuals among them attaches to the advantage of being distinguished among the few, when they would be unheard, unknown, and disregarded among the many.

When we compare the audacity of the Opposition at one time, with the captiousness of it at another; when we perceive how often their bold and groundless assertions of to-day, are explained by the shiftings and shirkings of to-morrow; when we reflect on the arts and talents they employ to perplex and delay national business; when we consider the encouragement they, in one way or other, have given to Repub-

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lican clubs and Democratic assemblies, we discover the real cause of the public opinion concerning them. For, I thank God, there is, and may there ever remain, a fund of good sense in the British people, which will finally prevail against every art to deceive and pervert it: and the peculiar attention of Mr. Pitt to this superior characteristic of the nation, is a very leading feature of that conduct which is so generally approved and supported by it.

That there are to be found in the private and common walks of life, railers against government and its measures—against the war and its objects, who are eager to magnify defeat and to lessen success, must be evident to every one who moves in the circle of general society. But I have long since established it as a maxim, and daily experience tends to confirm it, that such men possess either weak understandings or bad hearts; or are, some way or other, distressed in their fortunes. Nor have I ever met with any of these railing, croaking spirits, but I could bring them clearly and precisely

under one or other of these descriptions. For my own part, when I hear a merchant violently and fretfully exclaiming against the war, as unjust, unnecessary, and all that, I am disposed to dream of meetings of creditors. When a man of landed property lets loose his acrimonious reproaches on the same subject, I ask what part of his estate is about to pass under the hammer of Alderman Skinner or Mr. Christie; while I consider it as a matter of course, that those gentlemen who experience a difficulty in obtaining accommodations, for the service of the gaming-table, or any other elegant extravagance, should represent the war as diminishing the wealth, and of course fatal to the prosperity of the country. In short, men of desperate fortunes, from whatever cause their embarrassed condition may proceed, are glad to find an excuse for their approaching ruin, in the aggravated distresses of the nation; while too many of them, I fear, would not be sorry to shroud their own disgrace in the blackest cloud of public calamity.

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But there is a mode of fomenting discontents, which, as it unites the universal hope and prayer of all good men, assumes an artful and a dangerous disguise; and this, instead of loud declamations against war, consists of gentle wishes for peace.

A solicitude for peace is always popular. The idea is intimately connected with public prosperity, and accords with the feelings of private humanity. It is a theme on which the orator may display his happiest eloquence. It is a fine subject to oppose to loans and taxes for the support of war. In any season of public disaster, in the moment of defeat, or any of those untoward accidents which no prudence can foresee and no wisdom can prevent, peace is an impressive topic for popular declamation. But the real patriot, the discerning politician, nay every man who will direct his unbiassed understanding to the subject, must know, that peace may be injurious, and war beneficial: such are the circumstances and situations of affairs in great nations. The original ob-
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ject of revolutionary France was universal revolution ; that is, the general destruction of established governments and religions. The object of England was to check and subdue that destructive spirit. But though it is checked and changed, it cannot be said to be entirely subdued till it consents to peace : I mean such a peace as, being founded on the basis of good faith and mutual confidence, will change swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, among the contending nations.

The present Opposition clamoured for peace when Brissot ruled the councils of France ; and while they continued their clamours, he bled beneath the stroke of the guillotine. They continued their outcry amid the massacres of Robespierre, till his blood mingled with that of the innumerable victims whom he had sacrificed. They still persisted in their demand for peace, when Talien was supposed to influence, by a more moderate spirit, the councils of his country.

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Neither of these æras was capable of producing peace. It would have been folly in the extreme to enter into any negotiation with a people who had no settled form of government, and did not possess the power of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with Great Britain. At length, however, France received a constitution ; a regular government was established there, and the British Parliament was informed by the King, that it was sufficient to justify him in negotiating with it. Our Ministers accordingly manifested their disposition to peace, by proposing to the Directory of France, to enter into an immediate negotiation, and to consent to a congress from the contending powers, whose deliberations might restore tranquillity to Europe. On this occasion the Directory not only raised groundless objections to the mode of negotiation proposed by the Court of Great Britain, but refused to state or propose any other as more satisfactory to themselves. At the same time, they did not hesitate to declare their doubts of the sincerity of the

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British Ministry in these pacific propositions. But, neither discouraged by the evasions and insults of a foreign enemy, or the clamour of domestic faction, Government made a more direct and solemn effort to effectuate the peace of Europe; and, after the various difficulties which the Directory had opposed to it were surmounted, Lord Malmſbury was diſpatched to Paris, to commence the propoſed negotiation. The whole of this extraordinary buſineſs has ſo lately occupied the attention of the Public, that I ſhall content myſelf with a few ſhort obſervations upon it. Nor ſhall I hesitate to introduce the ſubject with this preliminary opinion:—that ſincerity never appeared to be a more prominent feature of any public buſineſs than on this occaſion. The very powers with which the Britiſh Ambaſſador was inveſted confirm me in this opinion. He had nothing to aſk for his own country, and was inſtructed to propoſe the reſtoration of all its conqueſts from France, in return for the acquiſitions made by the French arms from our Allies. He
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was ready to consent that France should be left at the end of the war as she was at the beginning, with the accession of Nice, Avignon, and Savoy. What could she wish for more? And had there been any desire for peace in her ruling powers, they would have been satisfied with such a concession. They could not suppose, in their vainest moments, that England would easily suffer France to possess an extent of coast, which, without an increased establishment in time of Peace, would be inconsistent with her own safety, and an extent of territory that might threaten the security of Europe. The proposals on our part were not only sincere, but liberal; and Ministers might, with less injustice, be accused of a forward zeal in having offered so much, than of insincerity for having offered so little. Nay, I have not the least doubt, if the terms proposed had been received by France, that his Majesty's servants would have been most severely reprobated, by Opposition, for their prodigal inattention to the interests and honour of their country. The negotiation,

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however, as it began in insult, ended in outrage: and Lord Malmesbury received a peremptory order to quit Paris in forty-eight hours. The whole conduct of the Directory was fallacious, violent and unjust; and their pretensions to retain, as a matter of right, all the territories which, in defiance of existing treaties, the French Government thought proper to annex to the Republic, were taken up in direct opposition to those laws by which the nations of Europe have been hitherto governed; while the doctrine they maintained, that the regulations which any country might choose to impose upon itself in time of war, should supersede the public laws—the balance, the power, the relations and interests of Europe, could only be promulgated by the haughty and desperate tyranny of the French Government. To such a preliminary, however, we are told that we must submit; and such a subversion of the law of nations we must acknowledge, before the Rulers of France will engage in a negociation of peace with us. But, I hope, the spirit of this country, its resources and courage, will furnish us with the means of concluding ere long a

safe and permanent peace, without this concession. The conduct of France, on this occasion, irresistibly confirms the original necessity of engaging in the war, and the present necessity of continuing it. Instead, therefore, of planting laurels round the altar of Peace, we must continue to employ them in adorning the brow of Victory.

As I have already observed, the superinducing motives of private ambition aiming at importance, of a dubious intellect resting on the opinion of others, the vexations of a desperate fortune, or the factious habits of a republican education, can alone induce men to represent our country, amidst all its embarrassments, as in a declining condition. On the contrary, Great Britain continues to maintain its place in the scale of nations ; nor do I fear to rest the truth of this assertion on a fair examination of its actual state and internal condition.

We are now in the fifth year of the most extraordinary and alarming war in which this nation was ever engaged : nevertheless, Great Britain never felt, in this period

riod of any former war, so little pressure on its trade, such abundant revenues, and a more general as well as active disposition to support the public measures. In what former war were supplies raised to such an amount, with so much ease, and on terms so advantageous to the country? Have we not seen a loan of eighteen millions anxiously contested by two distinct bodies of moneyed men?—while a loan for the service of the present year, to an equal amount, was raised in the short space of fifteen hours:—an unparalleled example of national wealth, and the confidence of a people in those who govern them!

The taxes which have been imposed to pay the interest of these supplies, are such as must be approved by all who consider their general effect and application. Those objects which conduce the least to the real comforts of life, and are more distinctly removed from the natural wants of man, have been collected with curious discrimination, to increase the revenues which the exigencies of the times imperiously demand.

With this superiority over every other nation of Europe, it would ill become the English people to repine at their lot; to complain of those burthens which a war, undertaken to preserve their national existence, has imposed upon them; or to suffer any menaces of France to alarm, or any untoward event to discourage them. It is an awful crisis: but the characteristic magnanimity of Englishmen is formed to contend with, and to triumph over it.

Ministers cannot command success in the operations of war, nor are they immediately answerable for the failure of them; but in domestic arrangements, and internal regulations, they assume a more acknowledged responsibility; and should these prove inadequate, the people will be better qualified to express dissatisfaction, and more disposed to demand redress. I feel, however, no common pleasure in the reflection, that the conduct of the present Administration is such as to save the people the trouble of employing those expressions, or making that demand. For I do not fear the contradiction of any reasonable man or good citizen,

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when I declare, that the laws which have been made, during the present war, for securing the tranquillity, preserving the honour, and maintaining the credit of the nation, bear ample testimony to the wisdom that framed them, by the salutary effects which they have produced.

I shall not apologize for recurring to the event of a former year, when I ask whether any remedy was ever applied to a public exigency with more foresight and promptitude, and whose effects were more complete, than the Minister himself suggested and carried into execution in the year 1793, to restore the current of the almost stagnant credit of the country. It was a very alarming moment: the immense circulation of paper was a bubble, which every reflecting man foresaw would one day burst; and the war, though by no means the cause of that event, certainly hastened the crisis. When, however, it arrived, a very general consternation accompanied it: at the same time, the leading commercial men in the city of London, while they stated the evil in its full extent to Government, were not only
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unable to suggest a remedy, but could not comprehend the practical success of the scheme suggested by the Minister to produce it. When Mr. Pitt proposed to issue Exchequer bills (to the amount of five millions sterling) on certain terms, as an accredited medium, to set the suspended credit of the country in motion; the mercantile people doubted its operation—while the Opposition rang the knell of British commerce, predicted the ruin of our trade and manufactures, represented the existing evil of such a magnitude that five millions in Exchequer bills would be but as a drop of water in the ocean, and considered the whole as a project which, while it was altogether unconstitutional, discovered, in the strongest light, the weakness, the incapacity, and ignorance of its author. But this was not all. Many of those respectable men, who were entrusted by Parliament to conduct and regulate the business, suspected the efficacy of its operations: but notwithstanding all the dire forebodings, trembling apprehensions, and pointed ridicule, which this political exertion produced; it not only attained its object completely, entirely, and immediately,

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but even with half the power it possessed. Two millions and an half of the Exchequer bills were found sufficient to invigorate our languid commerce, and to restore universal confidence to the trading part of the nation. This loan, after having proved the salvation of many opulent and respectable individuals, was completely redeemed; the last payment having been made June 13, 1794, without a single defaulter, and with the positive gain of several thousand pounds, after the payment of every expence attendant upon its progress and completion. Nor shall I hesitate to ask that veteran in finance and political resource, Sir Grey Cooper, who was one of the doubting managers of the business, whether this measure was not the work of a great Statesman, whose superior intelligence prevailed over those difficulties which alarmed his friends, were regarded as the source of future triumph to his enemies, and were rightly comprehended by none but himself. In former periods, Ministers had nothing to do but in the exigencies of the moment to see how others had acted in similar situations, and to govern themselves
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by their example. But we live in a period when experience is of little use; when events daily happen, new in their nature and operations; and when a Minister, instead of acting from the precedents of former æras, must himself make them for those which are to come. It is not my object to flatter Mr. Pitt, and to prove that I have said nothing but truth concerning him: I shall continue to state the evils to which our country has of late been subject, and the means he has employed to subdue them.

By the encouragement given by Government to the loyal and constitutional associations, the disloyal and unconstitutional clubs, which were pregnant with so much mischief, were annihilated. The bands of foreigners who were employed on the pernicious errand of sowing sedition and preparing the way for insurrection in this country, were at once confounded and dispersed by the provisions of the Alien Bill. It may be considered as a strong measure to suspend the Habeas Corpus: but the occasion demanded it; and I will boldly ask, what faith-

faithful subject or good citizen has suffered from that suspension? The arts which have been since employed to seduce the lower classes of people from that loyalty which has so long been their characteristic and their glory, are known to every one. The numerous schools of sedition which were opened at the close of the year 1795, in various parts of the metropolis, are on record. The doctrines that its inflammatory teachers promulgated in the fields and outskirts of London, are not yet forgotten; and the crowds of vagabonds of every description, who, under the pretence of applying to Parliament for a constitutional redress of grievances, composed their auditory, excited the astonishment of those whom curiosity led to behold these theatres of licentiousness and sedition. But the most alarming and horrid part of the drama remains to be described, in the attack made on the Life of the King. This atrocious deed was not performed when the Sovereign was engaged in recreation or amusement, in his private enjoyments or festivities; but in his progress to Parliament, to perform the most august

and solemn function with which he is invested by the Constitution, and without which the Parliament cannot proceed to discharge the duties to which it is delegated by the People. This traitorous attempt, therefore, was not made on the person bearing the character of a King, but on the Constitution itself. It is not necessary for me to expatiate on the virtues of George the Third, when I affirm, that there never was a moment in any of the most critical periods of our history, when the death of its Sovereign would have been attended with such enormous calamity. I shudder with alarm at the bare transient imagination of its fatal effects, not only in this kingdom, but throughout Europe. These evils, however, with all their alarm and danger, soon found a remedy in the wisdom of our Government; and laws were immediately proposed to restrain at least, if not to quench, the prevailing excesses. But the daring spirit, which was to be controuled by them, exerted, to its last agonies, a very inflammatory clamour against them. The Opposition Members, in the House of Commons, represented them

as badges of slavery, and loudly declared that a resistance to such acts of oppression was no longer a question of right, but of prudence. Nevertheless, these laws were passed by very large and commanding majorities in both Houses of Parliament: the gigantic mischief they were intended to destroy, instantly disappeared; the tranquillity that was thus restored, continues without the menace of similar interruption; and the Constitution, which, in the language of Faction, was to be subverted by these statutes, appears to have been invigorated by them.

It is not in my wish (as I have already observed), were it in my power, to flatter the Minister; but merely to represent his qualities and talents as they are, with the effects of them as they appear in the state and condition of the country, in order to excite a continuance of the public spirit and national confidence which have hitherto preserved our Constitution inviolate, and whose persevering exertions will, I doubt not, enable us to bequeath it, improved and

fortified, to the generation that will succeed us.

It is, I presume, altogether unnecessary to add another argument on the absolute necessity of the present war, while the late infatuated conduct of France compels us to continue it. Though I possess the common desire for general tranquillity, I entertain no apprehensions for the event of war, if the folly or the despair of France should force us to prolong it. That country, we well know, has assumed somewhat of a regular government, and undergone a very important change in its opinions and principles : nevertheless, it continues to present a sad picture of ambition and distress, of pride and desolation. Its only energy is in its sword ; and the sole advantage it derives from its successes, is a continuance of those deceptions which influence the people to submit to their rulers. The army, which at once sustains and overawes the civil government, claims, as a bribe for its obedience, a revenue that almost defies calculation ; while the civil administration is not less nu-

merous,

merous, and demands an establishment of equal enormity. Their navy, indeed, half of which has been taken or destroyed by us, adds but little, and, if ventured into service, will, I trust, add less to their burdens.

It would be imprudent to make the assertion, if it were not capable of proof, that the expences of the French government, during the last three years, have amounted to more than the whole of our national debt. Their system of finance is as absurd and iniquitous in its principle, as destructive in its operation. Their millions of assignats are no more; and the mandates, which succeeded them as a circulating paper medium, and which the official financiers declared to be their last resource, are advancing fast in the progress of depreciation. The former possessions of the French in the East Indies are now subject to Great Britain. Their West India colonies are either taken by us, or unproductive to them. Their foreign commerce is forgotten on the ocean; their internal industry is melted down in the army; their manufactories are destroyed; even their

their agriculture is so enfeebled in its operations, and the fruits of its labour so insecure in the possession, that its supplies appear to be inadequate to the common necessities of the people. Internal war has despoiled a large portion of their finest provinces, and those which enjoy a partial cultivation are subject to tyrannical requisition, and despotic purveyance. At the same time, strange as it may appear—but it is no more strange than true—the Rulers of this devoted country flutter in the ruin of millions, and, amid this scene of general wretchedness, display a state of splendor, luxury, and profligate elegance, which far surpasses the most festive and brilliant periods of their former monarchy. France, in short, is like a wheel without an axis; and though it has run with a celerity and duration equally improbable and astonishing, it must fall at last.

If Democratic insolence, that can no longer look with hope to the banks of the Rhine, should direct your attention beyond the Alpine mountains, to the triumphs of a Gallic army on the plains of Italy, you
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will behold a very affecting addition to the miseries of Europe. You will there contemplate another example of the delirium of France, who, while her own fields want husbandmen, and her cities are thinned of their inhabitants, employs the spirit and sheds the blood of her people, to obtain the delusive splendor of distant dominion. You will there view a French army desolating fruitful provinces, raising ruinous contributions on an unresisting people, and despoiling the seat of the arts of those treasures from which it derived that distinguished name. Alas! how many of those sublime paintings, produced, as it were, by the pencil of inspiration, and almost realizing the works of inspired writers, have been torn from the altars where piety had placed them, to adorn the gallery of the Louvre, and to receive there the alternate admiration and derisions of a vain and apostate people! But these, and every other advantage that France can boast, have been acquired by an unexampled profusion of blood. It appears to be in the policy of her Rulers, to lessen her people; on the principle, such as it is, that

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while their destruction diminishes the public burthen, it exhausts the strength of their enemies. The numbers, indeed, of her citizens cannot be calculated, which have polluted the plains of Germany and Italy ; which have glutted the Northern Wolf, and the Alpine Eagle. Nevertheless, France, with all her conquests, is like a garment, whose owner consoles himself, for all its filth, patches and rottenness, in an embroidered border, though its weight daily adds to the wear and tear of the miserable drapery it adorns.

Such is the condition of the people with whom we have to contend ; and when we consider the nature of our resources, the strength of our navy, the loyalty of the people, and the various powers of our internal defence, there appears to be little cause of apprehension as to the result of the contest.

We have a Religion the most pure that has ever humanized or enlightened the world ; and, thank God ! it still spreads
wide

wide its branches, and towers aloft towards that Heaven whither it conducts us.

We have a Constitution that rests on the basis of political wisdom, is the parent of all public and social happiness, and will, I trust, continue to be, as it has so long been, the envy and admiration of the world.

We possess a System of Laws universal in their effects, mild in their operations, and affording equal protection and security to life, property and character, in all the various classes of the people.

If, in civil affairs, a man enjoys the right to do every thing which is not particularly injurious to his neighbours, or generally detrimental to society, he possesses as much liberty as he can reasonably wish to use ; and if in religious affairs he may enjoy what opinions he pleases, and worship God in that manner which is most satisfactory to himself, provided he does not disturb the established religion of his country, he is blessed with as much religious liberty as a

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man of real piety and sound judgment can possibly desire. And such is the liberty, both civil and religious, which is possessed by every subject of Great Britain.

The grievances of the far greater part, if not all, of those who clamour to Government for redress, might, as they ought, be redressed by themselves. Their grievances, of which we sometimes hear so much, do not arise from any defects in Government; but from their own idle habits, disorderly lives, and vicious propensities. Industry and morality would afford them an instant, certain, and perpetual relief. As for the poor, those even who receive parochial assistance, live better in England than the husbandmen of any other nation in Europe. The artist, the manufacturer, the farmer, the tradesman, the labourer, and the whole class of working people, are better rewarded in Great Britain for their talents and their industry, possess more personal security, and enjoy greater comforts of every kind, than those
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in the same rank of life in any other part of our quarter of the globe.

When I reflect on the peculiar advantages we enjoy, I cannot consider the taxes we are obliged to pay, but as the price of those advantages. Do we not, with the utmost readiness, engage in subscriptions to guard our houses against the robber ; and shall we hesitate to contribute whatever may be necessary to preserve our country from the invader ? Do we not pay, with real satisfaction, an annual sum to insure our property from accidental fire ; and would it become us to refuse a small proportion of that property, to save ourselves, and all that is dear to us, from the sword and flames of an insatiate enemy ? It is the governing principle of our nature, the leading rule of social life, to yield a part for the preservation of the rest. In our passage from the cradle to the grave, every thing we possess, obtain and enjoy, is bought at a price : it is this principle that connects with, and assimilates to, every object of our existence, whether poli-

tical, social, or religious: and those men neither consult their reason, recur to their experience, or are influenced by their religion, who complain because they are subject to the allotment of our common nature. We do but pay a part to preserve the whole; and he must be a curious calculator, who, to exempt himself from the payment of taxes, would consent to lose the property that furnishes them. For my own part, I have long been convinced, and every day strengthens the conviction, that no people, in any country, enjoy so many and such blessings as the inhabitants of Great Britain, and pay so little for them. Besides, no Englishman, a character of increasing honour and pre-eminence, will murmur, when he reflects, that the tax he pays is for the attainment of universal peace, for other nations as well as his own, for the welfare of all the various inhabitants of the civilised world. If arguments were wanting to support these opinions, I might derive a very powerful aid from the present subjugated state of a large portion of Italy. If a fourth, or even a lesser part of the sum exacted by the sword
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of France from the Imperial territories in that country, had been granted as a supply to their Sovereign ; there is every reason to believe, that they would have been shielded from that invasion which now oppresses them, and whose resulting evils the most apprehensive spirit knows not how to calculate.

The war in which Great Britain has engaged with reluctance must be maintained with ardour ; and it is the conviction of my bosom, that we have the means of persevering in it, till we can make a safe and honourable peace. We may be said, I think, to possess the commerce of the world : and though the French should succeed in their attempts to shut up the ports of the Mediterranean against us ; the wants of the Continent must be supplied, by some means or other, from this country. The trade of India is our own, we have succeeded to that of Holland, and a treaty of commerce has been ratified with America. Besides, who will presume to calculate the resources of a brave and free people, living under a mild and well-regulated government, and supported

supported by individual industry? When we consider the objects for which, and the nature of the enemy with whom, we contend, the war may surely be said to have been attended with success and honour. We have made large and important accessions of territory, and enlarged the channels of commerce; nor has Great Britain failed in maintaining her national character. She has deserted none of her Allies, and has aided them all. Nay, she is at this moment contending, not only for herself, but those who have deserted her. We have only to be true to ourselves, and we may laugh at the menaced invasions of France, or any other violent project which its despair may suggest against us. The proud display of British loyalty to a good King, and a glorious Constitution, which distinguishes the time that is passing by us, will have as powerful an effect in depressing the spirit of the enemy, and checking their hostile designs, as in invigorating our own. Let us then bear the pressure of the present extraordinary crisis with the magnanimity of Englishmen—Let us proportion our native

tive energies to the occasion, whatever form it may assume, or wherever it may appear ; and France, fatigued with internal calamity, tired of foreign war, and sick of bloodshed, will consent to sheath the sword—while Britain, resuming its character as the arbitress of Europe, will hush the alarms of surrounding nations, and give tranquillity to every part of the globe.

Such, my Countrymen, are the opinions which I offer to your consideration, on the state of the nation, and the condition of its enemies ; on the war in which we are engaged, and the Minister who conducts it. I shall not, however, conclude this address, without congratulating you on the general and almost unexampled tranquillity which accompanied the late Election of a New Parliament. The loyalty and satisfied spirit of the people appeared throughout the kingdom during the course of it. In Westminster some attempts were made to interrupt the public peace. Mr. Fox and Mr. Horne Tooke seized on that opportunity to disseminate those political opinions, which
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the Corresponding and other Societies endeavoured to propagate from the press, and the field orators of Copenhagen House had dispersed from their rostrums.

These two extraordinary persons, after a long, habitual and violent state of hatred and contempt, surprised all parties by approaching each other with that natural complacency and apparent good opinion which arises from a similarity of sentiments. On a former Election, indeed, Mr. Horne Tooke addressed Mr. Fox as the butcher of the people ; accused him of those habits and dispositions, which must degrade him not only as a citizen and a senator, but as a man ; traced the outline of his life, even from his boyish days, with a black and bitter pencil ; represented him as equally guilty of personal as political enormity ; and held him forth to the disgust and execration of his country. On the other hand, Mr. Fox had hitherto considered, or affected to consider, Mr. Horne Tooke with indifference, if not with contempt, as to his political talents either of thought or speech ; as a man

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whom accident and audacity, rather than superior abilities, had raised into notice. But, at the late Election, Mr. Fox acknowledged his error, avowed the principles of this very Mr. Horne Tooke, adopted his mode of argument to strengthen his own harangues, and appears even to envy the impression made on the motley mob by the eloquence of the rival candidate.

But we are not, I trust, to be deceived by such opinions, or by such men. We well know that neither Mr. Fox nor Mr. Horne Tooke made their successive speeches from the Hustings of Covent Garden, to instruct or conciliate the Electors of Westminster. Nor can it be supposed, for a moment, that any discreet or responsible inhabitant of that city was to be found among the crowd, who daily presented themselves to hear and huzza, or to huzza without hearing, those proud examples of democratic eloquence. No—these orations were made for a far more extensive circulation, and to supply the extinguished services of inferior demagogues.

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But the good sense of this country is superior to such artifices as these. Mr. Horne Tooke fretted and fumed his sixteen days on the Hustings of Covent Garden, has been huzzaed and hallooed, and is heard no more ; while Mr. Fox, by his daily display of miserable sophistry, party invective, and audacious counsels, astonished many of his friends, and gave ample cause of triumph to all his enemies. He may boast that he was in the minority of the last Parliament ; and it is my sincere hope that he will run the same fruitless career in that which has been so lately elected. The present Parliament has an encouraging example in that which preceded it ; the period of whose existence embraced a most awful state of Europe, and various alarming circumstances in our own country. Nevertheless, under its regulating and tutelary wisdom, our national character was maintained, British glory was increased, domestic enemies were quelled, and civil liberty not only preserved, but strengthened by new securities and safeguards.

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That the present Parliament may inherit the same spirit, possess the same wisdom, and that all its measures may produce equal benefit and advantage, must be the ardent wish of every loyal subject of Great Britain; of every man who feels himself interested in the happiness of the human race.

And here it was my design to have concluded this address to those whom I have the honour to call my countrymen; but at the moment when I had consigned it to the press, a measure as sudden as it was unexpected was adopted by Government, which, from the novelty of its character, and its tendency to excite alarm, becomes a necessary object of my consideration. I mean the Message sent by the Privy Council to the Bank Directors, requiring them to suspend issuing any cash in payment, until the sense of Parliament could be taken on the subject, and until such measures were adopted as would maintain the means of circulation, and support the public and commercial credit of the kingdom at this

important conjuncture, &c.—This was certainly a very strong measure; but the more it is considered, the more, I believe, it will be found to be a necessary one.

The Bank Directors, on finding a more than ordinary demand of specie made upon them, and that this demand was daily increasing, thought proper to acquaint Government with such circumstance, that measures might be taken to check or lessen this alarming demand, which might ultimately affect the public credit of the country. In consequence of this communication, the Order of Council, to which I have alluded, was sent to the Bank, and immediately obeyed.

It cannot be denied, that the circulating specie of the kingdom had been, from various causes, in a decreasing state; and, though sufficient to carry on the general concerns of the country, was not equal to any sudden or extraordinary demand; and such a sudden and extraordinary demand took place,

place, from ill-founded and exaggerated alarms, respecting an invasion, in different parts of the country. The provincial banks first felt the effects of this inconsiderate panic, and, being unable to supply cash for the discharge of their notes, were under the necessity of submitting to a suspension of payment. The consequence was, that such an unusual demand for specie was made upon the metropolis, and so far beyond the usual course of mercantile transactions, as to occasion an alarm, lest there should not be a sufficient supply of cash to answer the exigencies of the public service. In consequence, therefore, of an application from the Bank Directors for some preventive regulation, the Privy Council recommended that which has been adopted. At the same time the Parliament entered upon the important business of framing such measures as would procure private accommodation, and maintain public credit.

If this circumstance had arisen from a
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decline in our commerce, or a deficiency in our revenues, it might have been the source of many and great disasters; and resignation to our allotment must have taken place of those hopes which are on the eve of attainment: but our commerce and our resources are flourishing and abundant; and the late alarm, arising from accidental deficiency, is already subsided. That some strong measure was requisite at this important moment, and that the measure which has been pursued was most admirably suited to the occasion, is an opinion supported by that commanding authority from which there is no appeal—the whole commercial power of the city of London. The affluent and prosperous state of the Bank was doubted by no one, and that it possessed a very large surplus was believed by every one: and when Mr. Bosanquet, (a Bank Director) at a meeting of the Proprietors of Bank Stock, declared his confidence that the present restriction would soon be taken off, and Bank notes once more exchanged for money, it was considered

ed as an opinion founded on premises that would not fail. Public credit, therefore, has received no material shock, and is still the same ; while the stocks are recovering from their depression, and, in the phrase of the Stock Exchange, begin to look upward : at the same time, the business of discount at the Bank, now that it is no longer a drain for specie, takes its former liberal extent, and the commercial world receives all the assistance it has ever required from that source of pecuniary accommodation. It can be, therefore, of little consequence whether guineas appear in a metallic form, and jingle in a purse, or whether they are made of paper, and lie in a pocket-book— if they are equally guaranteed by Government in their nominal value for current traffic. The increase of paper, and the disappearance of coin, in the more ordinary dealings of life, may, at first, occasion some trifling inconvenience which will work out its own remedy : but mercantile men will find little, if any, difference whatever in their situations. They must now do that by
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regulation which they have always done by choice. Their money-transactions are always carried on by the medium of Bank notes. Even when specie was most abundant, if a merchant paid to, or received 10,000*l.* from, his banker, it is not probable that a single piece of coin passed between them: and, in the largest payments between moneyed men, a guinea is seldom seen but to make up a fraction, which the round sums of Bank notes could not complete.

Under these circumstances I cannot but congratulate my country on possessing a Minister, whose courage can look public calamity in the face, whose sagacity can follow it through its remotest consequences, and whose wisdom will apply the remedy. To correct an evil arising from public alarm, by a measure which, however wise in its conception and salutary in its operation, should, and on its first suggestion, increase that alarm, marks a strength of intellect, and a magnanimity of character, before
which

which all the difficulties in which this country is involved, will, I doubt not, finally melt away.

The suspension of paying cash at the Bank in exchange for notes, is an event which, six months ago, I should have considered as the passing-bell of Old England; and yet it has been grounded on such circumstances, managed with such skill, and supplied with such remedies, as to encourage the nation instead of depressing it. For, as the quelling an insurrection always strengthens the arm of Government; I know not whether, by a temporary suspension, credit itself may not be sometimes advanced.

While Parliament is seriously engaged in forming such regulations as may be best suited to private convenience, the Secret Committee proceeds in its great work of confirming the public confidence. It has already and so clearly established the affluence and prosperity of the Bank, as to

calm the fears of the most timid, to satisfy the expectation of the most confident, to hold forth to the country the firmest basis of public credit, and to check the clamours of those who are the most vigilant to discover any future, or to rejoice in any present, calamity of their country.—While, however, the great majority of the nation manifest their confidence in Government, and come forward in every way to the support of public credit ; it must be expected that Opposition and its emissaries will neither slumber nor sleep on such an inviting occasion as now presents itself to propagate mischief :—You will therefore hear, I doubt not, that the ruin of Great Britain is now inevitable ; that public credit has received a wound which it will be scarce able to survive ; that Bank notes are sinking fast into French Assignats ; and that nothing but a change of Ministers can preserve the country, if it is yet to be preserved. I am indeed ready to acknowledge, that we are in a very awful crisis ; that the events of the period are new and alarming ; and that a temporary panic,

to which Englishmen are not subject (but which has disappeared in the hour of reflection, as it would ever do on the approach of real danger), has had a strong though a transient effect on the public mind. Nevertheless, it does not appear that the nation has manifested any discontents respecting those who are charged with its government; while not one relying look appears to have been directed, or one confidential wish been addressed, to Mr. Fox or his party. I trust, therefore, my countrymen, that the same spirit which has animated you in the late extraordinary exigence, will continue to unite you in resisting every effort of foreign or domestic enemies; that, possessing a name which has surpassed that of every rival nation, and secure in that freedom with which no other people are blessed, you will continue to shew yourselves worthy of the character you have so long maintained, and of the inestimable privileges you enjoy. For my own part, I have the firmest confidence, that the present period of difficulty and danger will, by

your characteristic patriotism and courage,
increase the honours of the British name,
and secure the prosperity of the British
people.

A PLAIN MAN.

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P O S T S C R I P T

ADDRESSED TO

MR. E R S K I N E.

SIR,

THERE are many, I doubt not, who consider your late publication as the work of a profound politician. But with all my partiality to your character, and admiration of your talents, I cannot separate from you the idea of an advocate addressing himself to the people of England in behalf of his party, and pleading, with some reserve indeed, the cause of the French Revolution, and those who continue to conduct it, against the Administration of Great Britain, without any reserve at all.

That the present war is attended with circumstances unknown to any other that has yet afflicted our quarter of the globe, and that our country is severely oppressed by the consequences

consequences of it, I am forced to acknowledge ; but, amidst the various resulting distresses that you enumerate, with a degree of sensibility that borders upon exaggeration, you have forgotten that very grievous evil,—the diminution of business, which this cursed war has occasioned in Westminster Hall,—so that Lawyers of the first practice have sufficient leisure to write political pamphlets.

I shall pass by your lamentation over the departed spirit of the English people, because they feel the insulted honour of their country, in the conduct of the Directory on the late negotiation ; and because their rough, common sense has made a trifling distinction between the American and the present war ; considering the one as a contest for Colonial possessions, and the other as a struggle for their existence. I shall not stop to consider whether or not Mr. Pitt is subject to the charge of inconsistency, because, as he once supported a Reform in Parliament, he should have since opposed and checked the proceedings of certain societies, whose design it was, under the pretext of Parliamentary

mentary Reformation, to subvert the Constitution. I shall not contend on this pregnant subject with such a reforming Knight Errant as yourself, who would have selected the moment for renovating the Parliament of Ireland when an enemy was hovering on her coasts. I have myself somewhat of a romantic disposition ; and though I cannot, in my more serious moments, recommend the practice, I am disposed to admire the hardihood of your genius, which, disdaining the mechanic accommodations and inglorious security of a dry dock, would rather lay down your ship on the billows, and repair her in a storm.

I am not disposed to enlarge on any distinctions that may be made between the public pleader, who is ready to do his duty, according to his instructions, for every client, and the political writer, who, without any instructions whatever, will go all lengths in support of his party. The advocate receives his brief and pleads from the tenor of it, and I firmly believe that a party spirit would never turn you aside from your professional

feſſional duty. We cannot always com-
 mand the bent of our genius, and the influ-
 ence of our private opinions ; but we may
 curb and correct them. I have no doubt
 that you would prefer pleading for Thomas
 Paine, Horne Tooke, and Hardy, to the be-
 ing engaged againſt them ; at the ſame time,
 I entertain that opinion of your profeſſional
 integrity, as to be firmly perſuaded that, if
 you were to take a brief for your moſt bit-
 ter enemy againſt your deareſt friend, nei-
 ther your zeal nor your talents would for-
 ſake you.—In your new character of a poli-
 tical writer, I conſider you as the voluntary
 advocate of Mr. Fox and his party, in plead-
 ing for whom, you are not bound down by
 inſtructions, but left to the freedom of your
 own thoughts, and to the full influence of
 your own prejudices and predilections. You
 may alſo avail yourſelf of the indulgence
 which Mr. Fox grants to all who are within
 the pale of his church, and employ, after his
 example, any ſophiſtry in argument, any
 miſrepresentation of facts, or concealment
 of circumſtances, which may aid the general
 deſign of promoting his advancement to
 power ;

power;—an event, by which alone, you must believe, as a leading article of the party creed, that the peace of Europe can be finally obtained and secured.

On this ground alone can I reconcile your reasonings on the cause and justice of the present war with France. You are of opinion, that it proceeded from the misconduct of Ministers; that Great Britain was the aggressor; that the dispositions of France to this country, previous to hostilities, were replete with friendship and good faith; and that, if they had been properly cultivated and encouraged, Europe would at this moment have been in the enjoyment of every civil and political blessing.

But before I take up the argument in support of a contrary opinion; before I speak of a series of acts of indisputable aggression on the part of France, which provoked the war and roused the genius of Britain; I must request you, as Mr. Pitt is the object of your severest animadversion and reproach for engaging in the war, to in-

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form me what personal motive of interest or ambition could induce him to involve the nation in a contest, in which, fond of power as you represent him to be, he might risque the loss of that pre-eminence which is so near his heart. Not only the motives of public duty, but every consideration of personal ease, must have urged him, if possible, to preserve peace. War could not increase, or, at least, it could not improve his popularity, and might tend to diminish it. The leading object of his life seems to have been the melioration of the revenue, the alleviating applications of finance, and the internal prosperity of the country ; all of which must be interrupted, if not, for a long time, suspended, by a state of war. He could not be swayed by any motives of private advantage or ambition, in calling his country to arms. The utmost gratifications of ambition, if he has it, or of avarice, which he certainly has not, were already within his reach. In short, such was his desire to maintain peace, that many persons of the first distinction, fortune and talents in the kingdom, accused him in Parliament, and elsewhere, for his supine conduct,

conduct, and lingering delay of those measures, which France has represented as the provoking causes of declaring war against us. When, therefore, he consented to unsheath the sword, it must have been from the most perfect conviction, that it was essential not only to the general interests, but the actual preservation of his country. That he is as good a judge, at least, on such an occasion, as any of his opponents, seems to have been determined by the people of England, who came forward with such distinguished zeal and loyalty to his support.—Your reasonings have not convinced me that he was wrong; nor will those which I shall offer in return dispose you to think that he was right. But it is not for you, with your superior talents and distinguished station, any more than for me, with those inferior abilities which are suited to the mediocrity of my allotment, to determine the question: It is for the nation at large to judge between us.

But, to proceed—

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You insist that we ought to have interfered as mediators with the Cabinet of Vienna on the part of France, according to her application for that purpose, in July 1792. But this opinion must give way to a consideration of what the King of Great Britain could have done in a mediatorial capacity. I need not inform you, Sir, that a mediation can be of no real use unless both parties require it, and the mediating power is ready to attack the party who refuses to comply with his terms of accommodation. How then could our King have acted as a mediator? If he had promised the Emperor, that, on condition of banishing the Emigrants from Germany, France would not interfere in the Flemish troubles, the Jacobins would have instantly exclaimed, that the people of Flanders possessed the right of giving themselves to France, if it was their pleasure. If he had guarantied the strange impracticable French Constitution as it then existed, he must have engaged in hostilities with the Jacobins, who had determined to abolish it. Had he undertaken to guaranty the right of the French nation to change its Constitution, which was

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so strenuously urged by Brissot, he then would have become an accomplice in the ruin and death of the King, and been engaged to support the subsequent conduct of the new Republic. In short, every proposition from France, may be considered as a snare to obtain our assistance in the conquest of Flanders.

As to the well-known decree of the 19th of November, you do not feel yourself altogether disposed to justify it; nor can you blame the English Government for requiring explanations concerning it, or suspecting the sincerity of the apology for it. Nay, you surprise me with an opinion, that this decree and other subsisting points of difference should have been made the instant foundation of war, as aggressions which admitted of no settlement, or have become the subjects of immediate negotiation. I must beg leave to repeat my astonishment, because I know not how to reconcile your readiness to go to war upon the principle of this decree and other concomitant circumstances, and contend with so much vehemence as you do
against

against engaging in it, when this decree, &c. was followed up by still more hostile decrees, by the infraction of treaties, the invasion of our allies, and the menaces of our own destruction.

After the decrees of the 19th of November and the 15th of the following month, war seems to me to have been inevitable ; and though at this period the situation of Ministers was full of difficulty, I remember to have been very much surprised at the calm manner in which they appeared to regard a war in Flanders—an event that had always been numbered among our great political evils ; and I then attributed it, though I know not with what justice, to a confidence in the superior character of German troops, when compared with the disorganised and undisciplined army of France.

It cannot be doubted that the French might hope, by evasive and fallacious explanations of their decrees and designs, to have lulled this country into a state of security, which would have afforded them the opportunity

tunity of prosecuting their own schemes against the rest of Europe. But England was governed by men who were not to be deceived; but who would have been glad to have negotiated, if negotiation could have obtained any good purpose. On this point you are pleased to lay great stress on the correspondence of Mr. Chauvelin: but what advantage could be expected by way of negotiation with a Power, whose Minister, in an official communication with the British Ministers, threatens to appeal from them to the people at large? But France, with all its pretences, never had any real intention to maintain peace. Brissot, in his address to his constituents, openly avows the hostile designs of France against England. In his own words, the determination was made to *brave all Europe*. But, as if the decree of the 19th of November were not sufficiently intelligible as to the diabolic designs of inciting the subjects of every civilised state against its legitimate government; the Government passed another on the 15th of the following December, as a further illustration of them, which concludes with the following article,

article, being the eleventh of this unparalleled production: " The French Nation declares, that it will treat as enemies all people who, refusing or renouncing liberty and equality, are desirous of preserving their Prince and privileged casts, or of entering into an accommodation with them: " The nation promises and engages not to lay down its arms, until the sovereignty and liberty of the people, on whose territories the French armies shall have entered, shall be established; and not to consent to any arrangement or treaty with the Princes and privileged persons so dispossessed, with whom the Republic is at war."—It is worthy of remark, that the very day on which the decree passed the Assembly, the Executive Council of France wrote to Mr. Chauvelin to disavow all intentions of a war with England. This decree was also sent to the National Commissioners in the Netherlands, accompanied by general instructions from the Provisional Executive Council, to explain and enforce it: and it is another very strong, extraordinary, and irrefutable coincidence, that the 8th of January 1793, when these instructions

structions were signed, was the very day that Monsieur Le Brun, one of the members who subscribed them, actually chose to write a memorial addressed to Lord Grenville, in which he declares, that the *French well know how to respect other Governments ;* and that *she does not wish to impose laws on any one.* I shall beg leave also to select, from a mass of corroborating evidence, the following quotation from Brissot's address to his constituents, which gives a clear, unclouded picture of the views and objects of the French Government at the time before us.—“ What did enlightened Republicans before the 10th of August, men who wished for liberty, not only for their own country, but for ALL EUROPE? He believed that they could generally establish it, by *exciting the governed against the governors,* in letting the people see the *facility and advantage of such insurrections.*” Nevertheless, Mr. Le Brun, Brissot's friend, and one of his party, assured Lord Grenville, “ that it “ would be wronging the National Conven- “ tion, if they were charged with the pro- “ ject of protecting insurrections.” But

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notwithstanding such a combination of discouragements, Ministers were not averse to try what a private negotiation would do in Holland; and Lord Auckland was instructed to meet General Dumourier with that view, on the frontiers of the country. But Brissot and his friends were too eager for an English war; and all parties were too jealous of Dumourier to encourage such a negotiation. Accordingly, in February 1793, Brissot read a report couched in the most hostile language, and war was immediately declared against England and Holland. In a short time, war was also declared against Spain, in a manner which invalidates the assertion of Mr. Fox, that our Court might have saved the unhappy King, if it would have acknowledged the French Government. The Spanish Ambassador had negotiated with the ruling powers of France, in the hope of attaining that object, and offered such an acknowledgment as the price of his life. But so far were these propositions from delaying the fatal stroke, that the imputed insolence of it was assigned as one of the reasons for declaring war. The French also expressed
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very great displeasure at the recall of the English Ambassador from Paris, after the 10th of August; and your opinion of that act, as far as it goes, supports the justice of their resentment. But it should be remembered, that Lord Gower was sent to the Court of France as standing on the Constitution of 1791; that, on the fatal 10th of August, the Government of France was dissolved, and the Ambassador's commission instantly expired. The King, it may be said, might have sent him new credentials; but to whom? The National Assembly was no more; and the Convention which succeeded, was called, not for the purpose of administration, nor yet properly for the purposes of legislation, but merely to settle a form, and give to France a new Constitution. The same reasons justify the offensive dismissal of Mr. Chauvelin. Besides, this person was generally believed to be intriguing with the English malcontents; and was a vain, silly character, continually boasting of his influence with Opposition, and of his intimacy with Mr. Fox, and the more distinguished persons politically connected with that gentleman.

You ask, Sir, what had this nation, as a nation, to do with the murder of Louis XVI? Considering that horrid act merely as a murder, I do not know that we had any right to make it an object of active resentment. But as an act declared by the greater part of the members of the Convention who voted for it, to be an example to *all* Kings, and a precedent for *all* subjects to follow, it may be expected to produce somewhat more than a mere passive sensation in the breasts of Englishmen, who venerate their Constitution, and love their King, who is an integral part of it. You proceed, indeed, in a most unmerciful manner, and with the summary spirit of a Carmagnol, on the subject of Royalty. It appears to be your opinion, that if all the crowned heads in Europe were cut off, (to repeat your own very pleasant idea) such an event would not justify a war. But, as by the extinction of Kings the British Constitution must be destroyed, I should hope that even the threat of such a system of decapitation would ever be considered by Englishmen as a sufficient cause to prepare for war with the whole world.

You

You place all the miseries of France, and, through her, all the calamities of Europe, to the conduct of Great Britain. We should, forsooth, have stood forth as her friend and protector, and have sanctioned her confiscations, her tyrannies, her murders, and all her nameless excesses, which have no example in the annals of any age or country. If the British Government had formed an alliance with the Jacobins, Europe, according to your opinion, would not have been in its present condition. I believe not—her condition would have been worse: for Great Britain, which is the present support, and will be the future resource, of Europe, would have been in a state of revolutionary ruin. But if the calamity of our quarter of the globe can be deduced, with any semblance of truth, from the conduct of any party of men in this country, it cannot be traced to the cold, passive, and merely preventive influence, as you are pleased to call it, of the British Government; but must derive its existence from the disaffected part of our community—from the clubs and societies which were suffered, for a time, to disturb

disturb the peace and disgrace the name of our country ; and whose addresses and deputations to the Convention of France, supported by the speeches of Opposition Senators, induced that people to believe that we were inspired by the spirit of Revolution, and should follow their example. I am disposed to think, that, if the people of England had been united, France might have been fearful of venturing to promote the independence of countries connected with our safety ; the Dutch Government might have continued to enjoy its native torpor, and Belgium have become an independent republic. But the correspondencies carried on with this country, from the beginning of the Revolution, flattered the French with hopes that our Ministry would be so entangled with powerful factions and intestine commotions in Great Britain and Ireland, as to be precluded from engaging in the concerns of any other nation. The situation of the French Government at this time, resembled that of Louis XV. in 1744 ; and they entertained the project of setting up a National Convention in England, on the same principle that their former King

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wanted to set up a Popish Pretender. Scotch covenanters, jacobites, reformers, and democrats, have all been made the tools of French ambition; and those among us who declaim most against the ruinous war, as they call it, should take shame to themselves that it ever existed.

The English Ministers have been treated with ridicule, as well as abuse, for encouraging an alarm in the kingdom in the winter of 1792. But how could some degree of alarm be avoided, when deputies were continually going over to France on democratic, not to say treasonable, missions; and when the famous democrat Gregoire, in the character of President, answered one of these deputations by expressing his hopes, “ that he should soon congratulate them on a National Convention in England?” About the same time it was declared in Condorcet’s journal, “ that the French Revolution was the equal object of the fears and wishes of Englishmen; that a Parliamentary Reform was talked of in England, just as the meeting of the States was, in 1787, talked of
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“ in France ; and that, from a Reform, the
 “ passage to a Republic would be short and
 “ easy.” I have mentioned these among
 innumerable and far more atrocious declara-
 tions, by the Convention, the clubs, and
 leading political writers of France, in order
 to bring home the cause and origin of the
 war to its real authors, not by the mere
 energy of assertion, but by incontrovertible
 testimony. I have, indeed, enlarged upon
 this part of my subject, because the strange
 events which have been produced by the
 French Revolution, have followed each other
 with such rapidity, that many of its early
 circumstances are loosened from general
 remembrance.

I cannot, Sir, agree with you, that the
 state of England on the death of Charles I.
 bears any resemblance whatever to that of
 France on the death of Louis XVI, but in
 the murder of a King. England was nei-
 ther alarmed nor disgraced with universal
 confiscation and daily murders, by rapine
 and incest, by scenes of injustice and cruelty,
 which were the horrid accompaniments of

the French Revolution. No menaces were thrown out by her against foreign powers; no encouragement was given to insurrections in neighbouring kingdoms; no correspondence was carried on with the disaffected, discontented, and abandoned people of other countries. After a civil war, whose most boisterous moments were scenes of tranquillity, when compared to the early periods of revolutionary France, the successful party executed its vengeance on the King. But Cromwell, who assumed the reins of Government, employed his superior talents to make that Government respected abroad, by securing tranquillity, and preserving good order at home; and though he did not hesitate to dispense with the forms of the Constitution, and to play the tyrant when it suited his purpose, it would betray the greatest ignorance, or the most inveterate prejudice, to compare him to Brissot or Robespierre, or any of their associates in blood, massacre, and ruin.

As the revolution of France is a monstrous compound of every crime of which

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human nature has been guilty, from the day of original sin, to the present moment, infidelity, blasphemy, and atheism must form a part of this incongruous mass of abomination. When this gigantic fiend set about to destroy every thing that related to good order, private security, and public happiness, it cannot be supposed that religion would escape it. Religion can never be deemed a matter of small consequence in civil government ; and the degradation of it must ever tend to unloose the bonds of society, and weaken the most powerful spring of action in the mind of man. To argue that whatever is abused may be lawfully subverted, is, in fact, to allow the subversion of every institution, both civil and religious, upon the face of the earth. I acknowledge with you that the Christian religion is from God ; that it is not the destruction of France, or any other kingdom, that can dissolve the eternal elements of which it is composed. But the total annihilation of the long-established mode of Christian worship by any State, the prohibition of every religious ceremony, the exile or punishment of every person

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consecrated to the administration of religious rites, and the establishment of atheism, are enormities of so diabolical a nature, as to justify the alarm, the horror, and execration of the whole Christian world. If you consider a man without any sense of religion as a monster, what an hydra must a whole nation be who disclaims it! I never understood that it was a distinct object of the war with France to restore her altars, but to preserve our own; to stop the contagion of her abominable principles from infecting us, and to check the infidel designs of a people, who had hardened their hearts against that benign influence, which is designed by our Maker to dispose us to good in this world, and to conduct us to the happiness of a better. You appear, Sir, to triumph in the downfall, as you express yourself, of the gross superstitions and abominable corruptions of the priesthood of France. This savours strongly of the cant of the tabernacle; and if a reform had been made of these gross superstitions and abominable corruptions, the interests and honour of religion would have been con-

sulted and advanced. But instead of removing, with a cautious hand, those decorations with which overweening piety or even priestcraft had clothed or disfigured the form of their religion, the French, with all the audacity of sacrilege, the avidity of avarice, and the insensibility of atheism, have plundered, pillaged, and finally overthrown that religion itself, and involved all that had been bestowed for its support, and to make it more imposing in the eye of mankind, in one tremendous scene of confiscation. The French not only treated Religion as a criminal in their own country, but persecuted her in every other where their power extended. For no sooner did the Dutch apply for consolation in their distress to the solemnities of public worship, than they abolished the established religion in Holland. In short, if they had possessed an atom of religion, they would not have seized the property of the church, or any other property, or murdered their King, or one another. Irreligion and anarchy are inseparable, and were consequently blended by the English Government, and the English People,

ple, in the views of that policy, or I should rather say of that necessity, which forced them into the war. If Mr. Erskine, therefore, who professes himself to be a sincere and zealous Christian, can satisfy his mind as to the insults and injury which Christianity has received from the Revolution in France, because the superstitions of Popery have been lessened by it, I must beg leave to suppose that some old rag of a mantle, from the League and Covenant of the last century, has descended upon him.

That a war waged against merely passive and speculative opinions, is equally senseless and extravagant, no rational being will deny: but I contend, that the present war is against opinions already realized, and daily realizing into actions which afflict the greater part of Europe. But if you should insist, as some of your party have done, that it is a war against opinions, I shall consider it as having been very successful both abroad and at home. For the wild and monstrous principles that were adopted in the commencement of the French Revolution, are

at an end ; while the doctrines of our incendiary clubs and societies have been completely suppressed, nor an atom of real British liberty expended in the suppression.

I shall not enter with you into the abuses of the Peerage, or the extreme folly of those people who subscribed eighteen millions in fifteen hours for the supplies of Government ; nor shall I express any astonishment, to use your own words, at the great representatives of the landed interest, who have supported and still continue to support the war. These are subjects I should be very willing to consider at large, but the limits of this publication will not allow of the discussion.

As to all your arguments relative to the motions made in Parliament to promote negotiations for peace with the unsettled government of France, I shall only answer, that they, all of them, had a tendency to produce mischievous consequences, and to encourage the people of France : and that during the respective reigns, for so I must call them, of Brissot and Robespierre,

Robespierre, there was not a single hour in which peace could have been offered, with honour, to the French rulers, or in which, distressed and endangered as they were, they would have listened to any terms we might have proposed to them. I well know, that Prussia, Spain and Sardinia have made their peace with France ; but I would ask any Englishman, who is not the slave or the tool of party, whether he would consent that Great Britain should make peace on the same terms, and hold it by the same tenure as those degraded powers ?

But after such a succession of pacific motions, as well as reiterated declamations against war, on the part of Opposition, it became a natural expectation, that they would have beheld the first dawn of pacific intentions on the part of Government with patriotic exultation. On the contrary, the King's message, notifying to Parliament that the French Government had assumed such a form as would justify him in treating with it, and that he was ready to engage in, and conclude, a treaty of peace, whenever it could
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be effected on just and suitable terms for his Majesty and his Allies, was received by them with coolness, and an affected suspicion of the sincerity of its pacific declarations.— After quarrelling, in the true spirit of a special pleader, with certain expressions in this message, you manifest your displeasure that a public notification of the change that had taken place in the sentiments of the British Government respecting France, was not made to its ruling powers; and that Ministers did not engage in some active and efficient measure to promote an immediate negotiation. But as the French had not sent any person from Paris to inform the British Court of their new Constitution; I do not conceive on what principle it was necessary for our Ministers to compliment them upon it. Both the new Government of France, and his Britannic Majesty's message to his Parliament concerning it, were sufficiently notorious to both kingdoms, and to all Europe; and required no diplomatic communication to confirm them.

As to the delay of Ministers in entering
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upon any negotiation, I think it not only an act of obvious discretion, but of political wisdom; and for the very reason, among others, on which Mr. Sheridan founded his proposed amendment to the address moved on considering the message in Parliament; the *possibility of another change in the French Government*. That gentleman, in the course of the debate, rallied Mr. Pitt on his eagerness to acknowledge the new Constitution of France; and then proposed an amendment to the address (which only expressed in *general* terms a readiness to co-operate with his Majesty in the object of it), praying his Majesty to give *distinct directions* that an *immediate* negotiation might be entered upon, because a change in the new order of things might take place and interrupt it. You speak of the power with which Mr. Sheridan supported his amendment; nor have I forgotten the overthrow his speech received on the occasion from Mr. Wilberforce: but, under all this fair semblance of an eager solicitude for peace, the real object of the motion was to compel, if possible, the Executive Power to make a peace, and

to render Ministers responsible for it. But if Ministers were to be tied down by the authoritative injunction of Parliament to make peace, I shall not ask, what terms would such an enemy as France grant us, under such extraordinary and unpropitious circumstances.

Parliament, however, did not comply with Mr. Sheridan's motion ; but early in the Spring of last year a proposal was made on the part of Great Britain to treat with the enemy ; and the mode adopted to convey it was sanctioned by the usage of European States. The sentiments of the British Cabinet were expressed in a note transmitted to Mr. Barthelemi by Mr. Wickham (the French and English Ministers resident at Basle), dated March 8, 1796, expressing a wish to be informed of the disposition of the French Government respecting the object of a general pacification, and whether France would agree to send ministers to a congress for that purpose. The answer that Mr. Wickham received from Mr. Barthelemi contained the sentiments of the Directory:

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on the subject, indicating a positive refusal on their part to enter into any discussion ; and even went so far as to express a disbelief in the sincerity of the British Ministers. To aggravate the insult, pretensions were then advanced by the enemy, which no man whatever could defend on principles of rectitude, by which France endeavoured to cancel all treaties, and to annul the Laws of Europe. What were the real motives of the Directory in looking, or pretending to look, with such a suspicious eye on Mr. Wickham's proposition, I cannot pretend to determine ; but the reasons that Mr. Erskine has assigned, could not I think be among them. They were, 1st, because we did not send them a previous notification of our confidence in their New Government ; and 2dly, because we did not prove the sincerity of our wishes for peace, on this occasion, by slackening the operations of war. As to the first—It has been already observed, that, when the King declared himself to his Parliament on the subject, he declared himself to all Europe. Besides, the proposition, which was in itself

of a preliminary nature, may be considered as a complete avowal of the opinion of the British Government respecting that of France. If any conduct in party could surprise me, I should feel myself astonished at the Opposition on this occasion, who, after having so often scouted all etiquette, as causing an unnecessary delay in the work of peace, should at length object to the conduct of Ministers as deficient in respectful form and diplomatic punctilio. As to the latter reason—Without entering upon the system of general policy, I shall not hesitate to declare, that, with such an enemy as ours, it would be criminal in the highest degree to discontinue the most vigorous exertions till peace had proclaimed itself to Europe.

Such was the first step on the part of Great Britain towards a general pacification ; but, alas ! it did not furnish much encouragement to renew the attempt. Nevertheless, in spite of all the difficulties that presented themselves, his Majesty was determined to make another trial for the peace

of Europe, the security of England, and the happiness of mankind. Accordingly, Lord Malmesbury, a nobleman of superior talents and high diplomatic character, was sent to Paris to try what could be done by a formal and accredited embassy. He certainly engaged in this mission, as one would think at least, under circumstances of peculiar recommendation. He had nothing to ask for his country; and was prepared to concede all we had taken from France, as a compensation for the conquests she was required to restore to the Emperor: while France was to remain on the footing of the *status ante bellum*, with the accession of Nice, Savoy, and Avignon. I shall not follow you through all your observations on the proceedings that took place between the English Ambassador and the Directory of France: nor shall I enter into any discussion of the political and commercial interests connected with the possession of Belgium. I shall, however, acknowledge, that, from all I have heard or read on the subject during a long course of years, an inveterate opinion has
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been formed in my mind, that its being in the possession, or under the controul, of France, would be highly injurious to the interests of England; and that nothing but the most exhausted state of our country could justify a submission to such an extension of the coast and territory of France. In all political negotiations, there are points which may be conceded at once; there are others which will not be yielded without a serious and active struggle; while there are those which are of such importance that they must at all events be maintained. Such form the ultimatum of a proposed treaty, and Belgium is comprehended in that character. The British Ministry, however earnest they might be for peace, would not allow such important accessions; while the French Directory, whose personal interest I presume it is to continue the war, refused, under an unheard-of, but frivolous, system of constitutional rights, to concede them;—and here the negotiation terminates. Nor can I discover, in the review of it, any just grounds of censure against Ministers for the manner in which it was conducted: on the contrary,

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it convinces me of their sincere and anxious desire to restore the blessings of peace to their country.

Though you accuse every one of a disordered reason, a corrupted heart, or a weak mind, who differs from you in certain articles of your political creed, I must risk one or other of these mortifying imputations, when I express my persuasion, that the New Constitution of France differs so substantially from that which preceded it, as to justify Ministers in fulfilling their avowed design to avail themselves of the first moment of stability in the French Government to forward a negotiation for peace. You cannot, it seems, discover any difference between the old order of things in France, which occasioned the war, and the new order of things, which produced the late endeavours to put an end to it. But if such a question as this had been brought before you in the way of business; a brief of three sheets, and a fee of as many guineas, would, with the power of euphrasy and rue, have cleared

cleared away all obstructions to your mental vision, and an host of distinctions would have risen up, armed cap-a-pee, and ready for contest. Even I, with my inferior powers and contracted sphere of comprehension, can discern many essential differences between the present and preceding circumstances of France, and which could not be invisible to your penetrating mind if the mists of party did not obscure them.

When the rights of man formed the ground-work of the French Government, there was but one representative body, which united in itself the legislative, executive, and judicial powers: a wild, delusive theory, which has been disclaimed by the New Constitution. The doctrine of perfect equality has been done away, and those artificial distinctions which bind society together have been admitted. Instead of a system of democracy, which is the worst of all systems; instead of a popular assembly, from whence, reason, whenever it lifted its head, was subdued by sudden and uncontrouled gusts of passion; instead of the fury and
 tyranny

tyranny of a mob, they have adopted a mixed form of government, in which the legislative is separated from the executive powers, and, by possessing two houses of legislature, in some degree imitates the British Constitution. I shall not examine into the durable qualities it may possess, or remark upon your client Paine's abhorrence of it, because its form bears some resemblance to an English Government; I shall only insist that there is a substantial difference in the state and condition of France under the old order of things, which was a democracy, and the new order of things, which is a mixed government, and in some points appears to have been borrowed from our own. But I do not contend merely for the change of form, but the good effects which have been produced by it. The new Government dissolved the reign of terror at home, and introduced an humanizing principle in the conduct of its armies abroad. "Proceedings," to use Mr. Erskine's own expressions, "now provoke the indignation of the enlightened part of that nation, which not long ago would have been a

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"signal

“ signal for enthusiastic approbation; and
 “ what was formerly a savage festival, is
 “ now scarcely endured as a political com-
 “ memoration.” I cannot, therefore, per-
 ceive any real cause for condemning the
 conduct of Ministers, when they disclaimed
 all intention to treat with Robespierre, while
 he was the bloody demagogue of France;
 nor can I doubt their sincerity, when they
 endeavoured to treat with the existing Go-
 vernment.

I have endeavoured, by a repeated exami-
 nation of what you have written about the
 making Belgium the *sine qua non* of nego-
 tiation, to discover something more than a
 violent mode of reasoning upon the subject.
 The Austrian Netherlands, and the balance
 of power, are considered by you as so much
 dust, when they are represented as an ulti-
 matum that may prove an obstacle to peace.
 I will not return your compliment, and ad-
 dress myself to the honour of the party, and
 ask them any questions under that sanction;
 because I have an internal conviction,
 founded on the characters of those who
 compose

compose it, that if Ministers had consented to yield the Netherlands to France, in the first instance, we should have heard nothing from the Leaders of Opposition, but violent declamations on the balance of power as the bond of political union in Europe, on the impolicy and wickedness of such a sacrifice, and the punishment due to Ministers who dared to make it. Indeed, this very balance of power has formerly been one of the most avowed principles of Mr. Fox's policy; and if my recollection does not fail me, I have heard him enlarge, with great eloquence and ability, upon that subject, as an essential consideration in all arrangements to be made with foreign powers, but more particularly with that of France. In short, the balance of power has always been considered by the wisest statesmen as necessary to the tranquillity of Europe, and that it should ever be maintained to a certain degree by the sword, if negotiation could not preserve it. Did not King William and Queen Anne make war upon France, in order to restrain the ambition of Louis XIV,

and prevent the conquests which he projected? And is it not equally dangerous to Europe, for a French Republic to acquire a disproportionate dominion as a French Monarch?

Great Britain, for centuries past, under various Ministers, and in various situations, had made it a primary object of its policy to preserve the Netherlands from the power or controul of France. This policy is one of those elementary truths in the system of British politics that had never yet been controverted, till the party spirit of the moment conceived an interest in throwing some ingenious doubts upon it. Mr. Pitt, in his speech, when the negotiation was considered in Parliament, was perfectly consistent. If, as you say, the danger of suffering Belgium to remain with France was sunk in his argument, the reason is evident; because that danger is universally known and acknowledged. And if ultimately the circumstances of the war should oblige us to yield this territory to France, we must recollect that we entail upon ourselves a constant expence,

pence, to guard us against the effect of this session, and to preserve our own safety. By your observations on Mr. Pitt's speech, you wish to convey an opinion, that he was afraid to meet the subject of the negotiation in its full extent, and that he had recourse to all that dexterity for which, you say, he is so remarkable, in order to conceal his own errors behind a powerful display of the absurd and inadmissible conduct of the Directory of France. Of Mr. Pitt I know no more than his public life has informed me in common with the rest of mankind: but he fills too large a space in the eye of his country, not to be subject of general observation; and it has long been my opinion, that a bold and fearless unfolding of his mind, an unequivocal display of his sentiments, and a cool disdain of those shifting arts in others which he cannot practise himself, form a distinguished part of his character.

After having travelled with you so far, through the errors, the misconduct, and ignorance of the present Ministry, and all

the disasters which you say they have brought upon their country and Europe, we come, at length, Sir, as I expected, to the means of our salvation—a change in the British councils ; that is, the advancement of your party to power. This country is under the impresson of many evils ; but such an event would transcend them all. If Great Britain should even be in so fallen a state as you describe it, I cannot look to Mr. Fox for redemption. He never will be my political saviour. There is nothing in his political conduct which has raised my esteem, or won my confidence. I do not think his proceedings as the leader of a party dignified or consistent ; and when that party represent him as the person whom Providence seems to have pointed out to save his country from destruction, I doubt their knowledge of the eternal councils. It indeed sometimes pleases the great Disposer of human events to employ means very irreconcilable to the erring judgment of man, to carry on his views in the conduct of the world ; but that Mr. Fox will appear in the station appointed for him by his followers,

and

and who hope to share it with him, is beyond my faith ; and will not, I trust, come within the limits of my experience. The talents of Mr. Fox are of a superior cast ; but the line and character of them are not such as form a great statesman. The only Administration in which he took a responsible part, was weak, inglorious, and unsatisfactory, both abroad and at home. From his early support of the violent and unconstitutional measures of the Middlesex election, to his disgraceful, if not contemptible, coalition with Lord North, and so on to his declaration against the Bills to prevent seditious meetings—"that a sense of discretion, and "not a sense of duty, prevented his acting "in opposition to them ;" I see nothing that can induce me to wish he may be invited to take upon him the government of the country ; and every thing which tends to fill me with terror and alarm at the bare possibility of it. Though the rulers of France may look to his public speeches for arguments to justify their conduct, or to enliven their imaginations with encouraging descriptions of the wretched state of Great Britain,

Britain, and the incapacity of those who govern it, I do not understand that he occupies a very distinguished place in their opinion. But even if he were a popular character in France, it would be a reason the more for his being suspected by me, and, as I should hope, of his remaining unpopular in his own country. It cannot be denied, that the party who support him, think no efforts too great to serve him, and direct the whole power of their understandings, their eloquence, and their cunning, to increase the perplexities of the present Administration, in order that he and they may form a new one. On the present important crisis, they do not conceal their exultation ; though I trust it will disappoint their hopes ; because it is the principle of many of them to consider national prosperity as an evil that keeps them from power, while they would welcome the blackest strokes of adversity as blessings, which would raise them to it. But I hope and believe, that the present enigma of Europe will be solved without having recourse to the sphynx of Opposition.

Such

Such are the observations which have occurred to me in reading your pamphlet; and I shall conclude them with asking the following obvious questions:

May not violent invectives against Government be considered as invitations to the common foe?

Does not the abuse of Ministers for not making peace, encourage the enemy to continue the war?

Is such a work as Mr. Erskine's calculated to encourage the French, or to enlighten the English?

In short, Is it more honourable, or useful, or patriotic, to be the advocate of *New France*, than to plead the cause of OLD ENGLAND?

F I N I S.

Such are the observations which have occurred to me in reading your pamphlet, and I shall conclude them with asking the following obvious questions:

May not violent aggressions against Government be considered as invitations to the common foe?

Does not the abuse of Ministers for not making peace, encourage the enemy to continue the war?

Is such a work as Mr. Farkine's calculated to encourage the French, or to enlighten the English?

In short, is it more honourable, or useful, or patriotic, to be the advocate of War, than to be the advocate of Peace?
ENGLAND?

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